



Standard Symbol

BMP Objectives

- Soil Stabilization
- Sediment Control
- Tracking Control
- Wind Erosion Control
- Non-Storm Water Management
- Materials and Waste Management

Definition and Purpose Straw mulch consists of placing a uniform layer of straw and incorporating it into the soil with a studded roller or anchoring it with a stabilizing emulsion. This is one of five temporary soil stabilization alternatives to consider.

Appropriate Applications

- Straw mulch is typically used for soil stabilization as a temporary surface cover on disturbed areas until soils can be prepared for revegetation and permanent vegetation is established.
- Also typically used in combination with temporary and/or permanent seeding strategies to enhance plant establishment.

Limitations

- Availability of erosion control contractors and straw may be limited prior to the rainy season due to high demand.
- There is a potential for introduction of weed-seed and unwanted plant material.
- When straw blowers are used to apply straw mulch, the treatment areas must be within 45 m (150 ft) of a road or surface capable of supporting trucks.
- Straw mulch applied by hand is more time intensive and potentially costly.
- May have to be removed prior to permanent seeding or soil stabilization.
- “Punching” of straw does not work in sandy soils.

Standards and Specifications

- Straw shall be derived from wheat, rice, or barley.
- All materials shall conform to Standard Specifications Sections 20-2.06, 20-2.07 and 20-2.11.
- A tackifier is the preferred method for anchoring straw mulch to the soil on slopes.
- Crimping, punch roller-type rollers, or track-walking may also be used to incorporate straw mulch into the soil on slopes. Track walking shall only be used where other methods are impractical.
- Avoid placing straw onto the traveled way, sidewalks, lined drainage channels, sound walls, and existing vegetation.
- Straw mulch with tackifier shall not be applied during or immediately before rainfall.

Application Procedures

- Apply loose straw at a minimum rate of 3,570 kg/ha (4,000 lb/ac), or as indicated in the project's special provisions, either by machine or by hand distribution.
- If stabilizing emulsion will be used to anchor the straw mulch in lieu of incorporation, roughen embankment or fill areas by rolling with a crimping or punching-type roller or by track walking before placing the straw mulch. Track walking should only be used where rolling is impractical.
- The straw mulch must be evenly distributed on the soil surface.
- Anchor the mulch in place by using a tackifier or by "punching" it into the soil mechanically (incorporating).
- A tackifier acts to glue the straw fibers together and to the soil surface. The tackifier shall be selected based on longevity and ability to hold the fibers in place.
- A tackifier is typically applied at a rate of 140 kg/ha (125 lb/ac). In windy conditions, the rates are typically 200 kg/ha (178 lb/ac).
- Methods for holding the straw mulch in place depend upon the slope steepness, accessibility, soil conditions and longevity. If the selected method is incorporation of straw mulch into the soil, then do as follows:
 - Applying and incorporating straw shall follow the requirements in Standard Specifications Section 20-3.03.
 - On small areas, a spade or shovel can be used.

- On slopes with soils, which are stable enough and of sufficient gradient to safely support construction equipment without contributing to compaction and instability problems, straw can be “punched” into the ground using a knife-blade roller or a straight bladed coulter, known commercially as a “crimper.”
- On small areas and/or steep slopes, straw can also be held in place using plastic netting or jute. The netting shall be held in place using 11 gauge wire staples, geotextile pins or wooden stakes. Refer to BMP SS-7, “Geotextiles, Plastic Covers and Erosion Control Blankets/Mats.”

Maintenance and Inspections

- The key consideration in Maintenance and Inspection is that the straw needs to last long enough to achieve erosion control objectives.
- Maintain an unbroken, temporary mulched ground cover while DSAs are non-active. Repair any damaged ground cover and re-mulch exposed areas.
- Reapplication of straw mulch and tackifier may be required by the Resident Engineer (RE) to maintain effective soil stabilization over disturbed areas and slopes.
- After any rainfall event, the Contractor is responsible for maintaining all slopes to prevent erosion.